



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Swimming advisories to continue at Kentucky site

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 7, 2009) – Although summer school vacations are winding down, state water quality and public health officials are urging swimmers to continue healthy swimming behaviors that will help prevent the spread of waterborne illness.

State officials are also reissuing swimming advisories for specific areas of Kentucky waterways.

"This information is provided to our citizens to help them make informed, good public health decisions about how and where they swim," said Dr. William D. Hacker, M.D., commissioner of the Department for Public Health (DPH). His department works with the Division of Water (DOW) in the Energy and Environment Cabinet to issue Kentucky's swimming advisories.

Guy Delius, director of DPH's Division of Public Health Protection and Safety (DPHPS), said safe swimming habits also are needed in public pools.

"Thousands of Kentuckians visit our public pools throughout the season, and these simple recommendations will help ensure the water will remain clean and our citizens healthy," Delius said.

Waterborne illnesses are caused by micro-organisms such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and *Shigella* and are spread by accidental swallowing of water contaminated with fecal matter. *E. coli* is the major species in the fecal coliform group. Because it is generally not found growing and reproducing in the environment, *E. coli* is considered the best indicator of fecal pollution and the possible presence of disease-causing bacteria and other micro-organisms.

Chlorine kills bacteria, but disinfection takes time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and environmental health specialists recommend these healthy swimming practices to keep bacteria out of the pool:

1. Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
2. Do not swallow pool water or get pool water in your mouth.
3. Shower before swimming and have your children shower.

4. Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
5. Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
6. Change children's diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.

Swimmers should also heed swimming advisories issued to protect the public from contaminants in some areas of Kentucky waterways. The DOW and DPHPS agree advisories issued last summer will remain in effect due to high levels of E. coli.

People should avoid swimming and other recreational contact with waters in the areas specified below because of the bacteria, which occur in human and animal waste and indicate the presence of untreated or inadequately treated sewage. Swimmers should also refrain from swimming in waterways for at least 48 hours following heavy rains. The runoff from heavy rains can raise bacteria levels in the water, introduce dangerous debris and turn slow streams and storm ditches into raging rivers.

Swimming advisories will remain in effect for the following waterbodies:

Upper Cumberland River

- The Cumberland River from Fourmile Bridge (Highway 204) to Pineville at the Highway 66 Bridge and from Wallins Creek Bridge (Highway 219) to Harlan.
- Martins Fork from Harlan to the Cawood Water Plant.
- All of Catron Creek, all of Clover Fork and all of Straight Creek.
- Poor Fork from Harlan to Looney Creek.
- Looney Creek from the mouth to Lynch Water Plant Bridge.

Illegal straight pipe discharges, failing septic systems and bypasses from sewage collection systems contribute to water quality problems in these areas.

Kentucky River

- North Fork of the Kentucky River upstream of Chavies.

Numerous illegal straight pipe discharges of sewage contribute to water quality problems along this section of the river. However, water quality has continued to improve and is approaching an acceptable level for swimming in some stretches of the river.

Licking River

- Banklick Creek to its confluence with the Ohio River.

The swimming advisory includes all of Banklick Creek and Three Mile Creek. High E. coli levels in this area are caused by combined sewer overflows and sanitary sewer overflows.

Residential and agricultural areas

The agencies also recommend against swimming or other full-body contact with all surface waters immediately following heavy rain, especially in dense residential, urban and livestock production areas. This recommendation is due to an increased potential for exposure to pollution from urban nonpoint source pollution, bypasses from sewage collection systems, combined sewer overflows and runoff from livestock waste.

State and local agencies continue efforts to reduce E. coli levels. The Cabinet for Health and Family Services works with local health department environmental health staff to ensure that all new septic system installations are properly installed. DOW staff work with wastewater plant operators to ensure sewer overflows are minimized. Both agencies routinely address straight pipe issues and are gradually reducing the number of these discharges across the state.

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